



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

## Member Organizations

**The Umbrella Center for  
Domestic Violence Services**  
Ansonia, CT

**The Center for Family Justice**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Women's Center**  
Danbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program  
United Services**  
Dayville, CT

**Network Against Domestic  
Abuse**  
Enfield, CT

**Domestic Abuse Services  
Greenwich YWCA**  
Greenwich, CT

**Interval House**  
Hartford, CT

**Chrysalis Domestic Violence  
Services**  
Meriden, CT

**New Horizons**  
Middletown, CT

**Prudence Crandall Center**  
New Britain, CT

**The Umbrella Center for  
Domestic Violence Services**  
New Haven, CT

**Safe Futures**  
New London, CT

**Domestic Violence Crisis Center**  
Norwalk, CT

**Women's Support Services**  
Sharon, CT

**Domestic Violence Crisis Center**  
Stamford, CT

**Susan B. Anthony Project**  
Torrington, CT

**Safe Haven**  
Waterbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program  
United Services**  
Willimantic, CT

## Testimony Supporting

### HB 6355, AAC Risk Protection Orders and Warrants

#### Judiciary Committee March 5, 2021

Good afternoon Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Fishbein, and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those who serve them. Our 18 member organizations provide essential services to nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

This bill seeks to expand access to the state's existing risk warrant protections by creating a new "risk protection order" that can be sought directly by a family/ household member or medical professional who has concerns that someone possesses firearms and poses a risk to themselves or others. The proposed change offers an important option for victims of domestic violence.

In 2016, Connecticut updated its restraining order statute to require that respondents surrender firearms within 24 hours of being served with a temporary, ex parte restraining order. The state made this change because it recognizes the dangerous combination posed by domestic violence and access to firearms. Research out of Johns Hopkins University has demonstrated three important facts about domestic violence – leaving is the most dangerous time for victims, domestic assaults involving firearms are 12 times more likely to result in death than those involving other weapons or bodily force, and women in an abusive relationship are 5 times more likely to be killed if their abuser has access to a firearm. Victims of domestic violence need options to protect themselves from firearms and the proposed bill offers just that.

Six years ago when we asked the General Assembly to remove firearms as part of temporary restraining orders, we noted then that the state's existing risk warrant was another option for victims, but that it should not be the only one. That's because the state's existing risk warrant process involves calling the police, who then conduct an investigation and apply for the warrant from a judge. For a variety of reasons, not all victims choose to involve law enforcement in their abusive relationship. By giving family or household members the ability to go directly before a judge and ask for this protection without the fear that a call to law enforcement will result in the arrest of their abuser, you are making these important protections available to more people.

We also applaud the committee for requiring that firearms seized under this law be transferred to a federally licensed firearms dealer and not simply to anyone eligible to possess firearms and ammunition. Transferring firearms to a friend or family member may mean that those firearms are still easily accessible to the individual who has been deemed by a court to be a threat to themselves or others. This is a commonsense change.

For individuals who are experiencing something that makes it unsafe for them to possess firearms, it is often family/household members or medical professionals who will have the most intimate knowledge about the risk that individual poses.

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Whether it's a chosen behavior like domestic violence or a mental health issue that is far beyond that individual's control, those closest to them will know when it's time for them to get help. It is reasonable for a judge to make a determination about a person's threat to themselves or others based on the information provided in a complaint by a family/household member or medical professional. We urge your support.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

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